579 in-white", to control this. Sometimes these resort to the old-fashioned and officially illegal "afarsata" collective arrest of a series of suspected hamlets.

● 644 701 Another old pattern that survives is the personal bodyguard of the supreme ruler, i.e. the emperor, which has now increased to a size equal in manpower to the Ethiopian army itself, and is reputed to be far better trained and equipped. Centered at the capital and a few strategic spots, with greater mobility than the army, and battle experience gained in Korea, it contains much of the Galla "balbat" element directly loyal to the present royal family. The regular army is scattered throughout the country, and is utilized against periodic uprisings in the border lowlands and escarpments, such as the desert Danakil, the Issa and the Raya Galla of the eastern escarpment who occasionnally go on the warpath after the harvest season.

554 625 701 The attitude of the common people who admire an individual hero but mock uniformed dandies, still persists, much to the annoyance of the uniformed police of the provincial towns, and of the soldiers. The non-uniformed "näch lēbash" are far more respected, and their bravery is acknowledged.

638 world", i.e. Jesus Christ), indicating the section of the town in which he lives.

C. Appointment to Office and Decision-Making.

566 The feudal social structure led almost invariably to paternalistic attitudes in appointment to office and in decision-making. This attitude continues in remote rural districts as well as in the most modern-appearing state offices in Addis Ababa.

661 644 The feudal lord, having conquered new lands, usually rewarded his most trusted followers with fiefs and connected privileges. For example, the newly-appointed "mälkäña", who may have previously served merely as military orderly to the warlord, as cupbearer and meatcarver, could be appointed to act as liaison officer and administrator of Galla lands, allocating 1/4 of the land to the old Galla "balbat" as "mälkäña" land of their own, and keeping the rest as his own fief. He would continue to make himself useful as tax-collector, foreman on statute-labor for the lord, as general spy for the ear of the Lord, available for any special service at any time. But he had little security of office or of land tenure, both being at the mercy of any caprice of the lord. It was therefore essential for him to spend much time at the court of the feudal lord, bowing and scraping, ever fearful that some competitor, perhaps the former "läfäri" the herald who announced decrees and public inquiries,

ight gain in favor and edge him out with contrived accusations.

his pattern can still be observed, from the modest court of the sub-provincial governor and local judge, to the palace courtyard of the emperor himself. It is called "dəj tənät" (lit. waiting by the gate). The frequency of appearance, in order to remain in good graces, is usually twice a week; more often if a special favor is sought. The place is preferably within a few yards [57] of a spot where the lord (or emperor) will pass. When this takes place, the courtier bows from the hips, very low. This will usually be acknowledged with a small nod. The procedure is considered essential by the aspirant for office, and by the office-holder, for these reasons:

Positive Reasons:

Reaffirmation of continued loyalty;

To indicate readiness to receive orders, pass messages, give information;

To enable the lord to play his paternalistic role (i.e. the lord can and periodically does ask whether the courtier is happy in his job or [57] wishes a new one; ettiquette requires a response of happiness at least for six months after having received a job, even if it was a demotion or an unpleasant task).

Negative Reasons:

To counteract rumors of disloyalty spread by rivals;

1: Messing E-5 (1953-1954)1957 MP5 Amhara MP5

661
694

this would almost certainly happen in case of repeated absences;

To prevent the ruler from forgetting, or to pretend having forgotten, a position of favor promised to the applicant. This follow-up also indicates tenacity, a positive point.

To keep the ruler from thinking that the office-holder has become so proud and independent that he has forgotten the "father" from whom all good things come.

To counteract plots being hatched in his absence, which would not benefit him.

661
178

Another old requirement in appointment to office, which now is in force primarily in the district capitals and rural areas only, is the gift, "shum gänzäb" (lit. money for appointment), paid to the chief at the time of application.

Until very recently, the newly-appointed governor-general of a province would decree a "shum shir", a general, automatic abrogation of all office holdings left by the preceding regime; this enabled the new governor to appoint his own followers, courtiers, retainers, poor relations, etc., in office; but in practice he usually reappointed most of the former officials, down to the many "chega shum" headmen, on payment of an appropriate "shum gänzäb". In recent years this practice has been curtailed at the upper levels; for both the director-general of the province, and the secretary-general are now appointed by the central government in Addis Ababa.

181 strained behavior, civilization, but which now has assumed the con-
178 notation of "modern" in the Western sense. It includes the improved
[562] status of the woman, no longer a mere hewer of wood and hauler of water; and it even became formalized in 1942 when an imperial proclamation, in establishing a Consultative Committee on Legislation, gave instruction to draft new laws that would be "not repugnant to natural justice and humanity".

178 But many old values still persist even at the apex of the
576 hierarchy where the prime "change agent", the emperor, resides. Most
644 notable, to foreign observers, is the continuation of the "daj tenat" (faire l'antechambre: lit. waiting at the gate). This is the traditional palace courtyard ceremony of bowing to the emperor at least twice a week. Emperor Haile Selassie has permitted this institution to continue. Every governor-general has his own "daj tenat" court when he returns to his provincial capital; and so on down the line.

195 The traditional oath on the king's life, sworn even in petty matters and everyday affairs ("Hayle Selassye yemut", lit. May the emperor die; i.e. if I lie) is still in common use and no attempt has been made to suppress or reduce its usage. Haile Selassie well remembers that during the first half of his reign his Amhara subjects still used to swear by the name of the dead Menelik or by provincial dynasts such as Ras Gugsa.

178 Outlook: the "culture lag" between material and non-material culture that has created so many social problems in so many parts of the present-day world has not yet taken place in this society. The old attitude of accepting and enjoying trade goods without trying to reproduce what the foreigner has created, still persists. Direct exploitation of what nature provides still fills most physi-

2: Allen G-5 (1941) 1943 MP5 Amhara MP5

of Semitic blood. There is rather more of the Semite in the Tigraian and the Amhara than in the Shoan and the Gojjami. The Tigraian language has come much under Semitic influences, and there are many common elements in Amharic and Arabic: not only in vocabulary but also in syntax. The Amharic alphabet, with over two hundred and fifty odd letters, is a very exact instrument for rendering the language. It is derived from one of the old Semitic alphabets of the Middle East. Amharic has many explosive sounds which often give the impression that the speaker is excited and indignant when he is not, and with the impatient foreigner this can sometimes lead to misunderstandings.

Physically the Amhara is slight and light-boned with regular rather delicate features. He has quick almost bird-like movements and his manner gives the impression which I cannot describe better than by the word fluttering. The hair and beard has the characteristic Hamitic corrugation. Men often go iron grey in middle life, but seldom white. The hair of the women is artificially frizzed and dressed with butter-grease to fix it. This gives them a gollywog appearance.

The Amhara have the most charming manners and they like to stand on ceremony. They have a complicated social hierarchy and always dismount as a salutation to superior persons. They will also touch with their lips the hands or knees of superiors. At the same time they have the naturally easy and democratic outlook of the East; and the poorest man will expect attention and the right of access to a Ras, or even to the Emperor. The approaches to the palace at Addis Ababa were lined with sometimes quite humble people, farmers and soldiers, waiting an opportunity to secure the Emperor's decision on some matter.

To respond to his ceremonial manners is an easy way to the heart of the Ethiopian. At the same time they are quick to take offence and their shrill voices are soon raised in anger.

The frail physique and mercurial temperament of the Amhara is doubtless the result of the rarefied alpine atmosphere and of a diet predominantly of grain paste seasoned with strong condiments—which they vary from time to time with orgies on practically raw meat. But fragile as they look, the Amhara are, nevertheless, extremely hardy. They will sleep out in all weathers with nothing to cover them but their thin cotton robes; they are remarkable runners and can maintain a jog trot all day; they are like goats on the hillside.

I believe the Amhara to be naturally intelligent with a brain which only awaits proper training and development. During the five years of the Italian occupation, no small proportion of the population of Addis Ababa acquired a fair knowledge of Italian. I knew a boy of twenty who, in addition to excellent English, was proficient in Arabic, Somali, Galla, and Swahili. He came, of course, from Harar, which is a great metropolis for peoples from all round the Red Sea. Abyssinian recruits acquired a knowledge of Morse with remarkable facility.

When it is possible to overcome the linguistic difficulty and get on friendly terms with Ethiopians, they prove delightful companions, naturally kind, generous and friendly, with a charming sense of humour and often a nice

2: Allen G-5 (1941) 1943 MP5 Amhara MP5

their cattle, and I was not popular with them. I had forty or fifty of my own servants, and I always made one of these come along with me with a spare mule and a rifle in case I saw something to shoot on my daily expeditions. It was not until the expedition was over and I was back again in Addis Ababa that it came out quite casually that every night over a camp fire the "victim"—that is to say, the particular servant who was to go with me next day—was compelled solemnly to make his will and divide his miserable property, with the rest of the servants as witnesses, because they were convinced that it was only a question of time before I was slaughtered by the Abyssinian army, together with the servant who would be with me. These people had no particular cause to love me, but they never complained and never refused to go.

I remember the Emperor Haile Selassie when he was a small boy in the entourage of Menelik. He and his cousin Lej Iyasu, the emperor whom in due course he deposed, were there with other small boys, and they used to wear those black satin cloaks, such as you have seen in the Emperor's portraits, with little gold or brass buttons, a very fine white scarf showing, and beautifully white cotton trousers. In their efforts to please the Emperor Menelik the Europeans used to send all sorts of consignments of our goods. One consignment which came along was a whole case of gibus or opera hats. Some enterprising man had made these of a kind of patent leather. The ordinary opera hats of silk were rather dull in appearance, but the new patent leather hats did not catch the fashion in Paris or London, and so they were shipped to Abyssinia. I gave them to Menelik, whereupon he made all these small boys in the court wear these shiny opera hats. In the result, although many would think they looked ridiculous, they appeared to me extraordinarily like the small boys of my own school so far as headgear was concerned, and I thought they suited them perfectly well.

The Abyssinians were beautifully mannered, they were very receptive, and, as exemplified by their present Emperor, many of them have all the best instincts of civilization in them. Helped as they have been by the very remarkable individuals whom Captain Allen has mentioned: Boustead, Pilkington, Thesiger, Sandford, and others, they have done great things for their country, and will do yet more; and that is one of the good results that has come out of this war.

In your name I wish to thank our lecturer of this evening for his very delightful lecture.

3: Buxton Y-5 (1946-1948)1949 MP5 Amhara MP5

Ababa and Debra Berhan remains Galla country. The Amharas have re-occupied the region immediately around Debra Berhan, their southern limit corresponding roughly with the edge of the sheet; but the churches built to meet their needs (including the new St. Gabriel already once mentioned) are comparatively few and far between, a confirmation of the recent date of the re-colonization.

The Gallas remained in possession of the plateau country until the early nineteenth century when Sahele Selassie, king of Shoa, began to push them back. The half-dozen hill-top forts shown on the sheet almost certainly date from this time, or were reoccupied then. The capital of Shoa since the eighteenth century had been Ankober, on the edge of the great eastern escarpment, some 20 miles east of Debra Berhan. But Sahele Selassie, as part of his anti-Galla campaign founded, in about 1830, a new capital at Angolala in the midst of Galla country. He thereafter divided his time between Angolala and Ankober. A largely disused track, still well-defined in most parts, is shown crossing the sheet from Angolala in an easterly direction; this was evidently an old route joining the two capitals. Harris,[1] who conducted a British Mission to Sahele Selassie in 1841–42, visited Angolala which then contained four or five hundred huts. He also describes Sahele Selassie's two-storied "palace," built by an Albanian [2] visitor, standing on an eminence—which however the king would not inhabit, from fear of earthquakes. Angolala continued to be used by Sahele Selassie's son, king Haile Malakot, and the great Menelik, who was Haile Malakot's son, had been born here in 1843—just after the time of Harris's visit.

Not much remains now to show that Angolala was so recently the twin capital of Shoa; but the site of Sahele Salassie's house, an artificial mound crowning the ridge, is easily identified and commands a fine view of the countryside. Inside the mound is a vaulted cellar, its masonry showing clear signs of European workmanship, as also does the central stone-built element of the local church of Kidane Meheret. This work is now exposed to view as the church was burnt down during the Italian occupation. Angolala remains a well-populated area, but only a very few huts now stand among the remains of defensive walls near the old royal residence.

The young Menelik, up to the age of twelve, must have known all this country well. But at that time (1855) the newly crowned emperor Theodore, whose ambition was the unification of Ethiopia after a century and a half of anarchy and internal strife, came down from the north with the object of subjecting Shoa to his personal rule. He defeated king Haile Malakot on the plains of Atakilt, the irrigated area just south-east of Debra Berhan. Haile Malakot died immediately after the battle, and Menelik was carried away captive by Theodore—who, however, afterwards treated him as a son rather than a prisoner. For some years Menelik followed in the emperor's train, moving with him from Gondar to Debra Tabor and then to the hill-fortress of Magdala, Theodore's last capital and later the scene of his undoing. Several years before Napier's siege of 1868 Menelik had escaped from Magdala during, it is said, one of Theodore's periodic orgies. A youth in

[1] Harris, 'The Highlands of Aethiopia,' London, 1844.
[2] It is much more likely that Harris meant an Armenian.

4: Alvarez M-5 (1520-1526) 1881
MP5 Amhara MP5

and men who sleep there to watch, from fear of the animals 231
that roam about the villages all night: and if they did not
keep this watch nothing alive would remain which they
would not devour. The people who go to sow millet in the 241
mountains of Bisan belong to this country and the neigh- 221
bouring towns. The reason why they go and do it is this. 132
Here there are very numerous grain crops of every kind
and nature that can be mentioned, as I have already said;
and because it is near to the sea, by which go all the
provisions for Arabia, Mekkah, Zebid, Jiddah, and Toro,[1]
and other parts; and they carry the provisions to the sea to
sell them. And because in this country the winters are
divided into seasons, and the seed crops do not grow
except with the rains, they go to sow these millet
fields at the mountain of Bisan, where it is winter in the
months of February, March, and April. There is this same
winter in a mountain called Lama, in this kingdom of the
Barnagais, which is fully eight days' journey from the
mountain of Bisan. In another country, which is named
Doba, and which is quite a month's journey from this lord-
ship of Lama, there is winter in these same months. As
for these millet fields, they require rains, and as these win-
ters happen out of season, they go and sow them where it
rains, and so profit by both winters. In this town of 346
Barua are two churches with many priests, one close to the 562
other, one is for men, the other for women. The men's
church is called St. Michael, that of the women is named
after the apostles Peter and Paul. They say that a great [644]
lord, who was then Barnagais, built the men's church, and
gave it the privilege that no woman should enter it, except
only the wife of the Barnagais, with one damsel, whenever
she went to take the communion, and even she does not
now enter the church, but takes the communion at the
door in the inner circuit with the laity, and so the

[1] Mount Sinai.

4: Alvarez M-5 (1520-1526) 1881
MP5 Amhara MP5

346 other women do in the church of the apostles, who take it
562 in its place. I always saw the women of the Barnagais go
[644] to the women's church to take the communion with the other women, and I did not see them use the privilege which they say they have, of taking the communion, with one damsel, in the church of the men. The circuits of the churchyards join to one another; they are of very high
796 walls. They make the sacramental bread for both churches in one building, and they say the masses in both churches at the same time, and the priests who serve in one church serve also in the other; that is two thirds of the priests in the men's church, and one third in the women's church, and so they are distributed. These churches have not got tithes, but they have got much land belonging to the priests, and they put it out to profit and divide the revenues of the lands among themselves: the Barnagais gives what is necessary to the churches, such as ornaments, wax, butter, incense in sufficient quantity, and he supplies them with
[792] everything. There may be in these churches twenty priests and always twenty-two friars. I never saw a church of priests which had not got friars, nor a monastery of friars which had got priests; because the friars are so numerous that they cover the world, both in the monasteries as also in the churches, roads, and markets: they are in every place.

CAP. XXVI.—*How the priests are, and how they are ordained, and of the reverence which they pay to the churches and*
793 *their churchyards.*

684 The priests are married to one wife, and they observe the
587 law of matrimony better than the laity: they live in their houses with their wives and children. If their wife should die they do not marry again; neither can the wife, but she

4: Alvarez M-5 (1520-1526) 1881
MP5 Amhara MP5

and so receive absolution. They pray in the churches of 796
the canons as in those of the friars. Friars do not marry, [782]
canons and priests do so. When the canons live together 793
in the circuit they eat in their houses, and the friars eat in
community. The chiefs of these churches are called Lica-
canate. The wives of the canons have houses outside of the
circuit, where they go to live with them: the son of a
canon remains a canon, and the son of a priest not, except
he chooses later to become one. No tithes are paid to any
church, they live on the large properties which the churches
and monasteries possess. Complaints against the clergy [694]
are dealt with before the secular justice.

The vestment is made like a shirt, and the stole with a 292
hole in the middle, and put over the head; they have no
maniple, nor amice, nor girdle; priests and friars all have [302]
their heads shaved, and the beards not. The friars say
mass with their hats on their heads, and the priests with
their heads bare.

In no church is more than one mass said, and no mass is 794
said for alms, not even for the dead. When any person dies,
the priests come with cross and holy water and incense,
and recite certain prayers for him, and carry him off to
burial very hurriedly: next day they bring offerings: the
churchyards are all closed, so that nothing can enter them.

Prester John has no determined place of abode, he 643
always goes about the country in tents, and he will always
have in his camp five or six tents among good and common
ones: and there will always be at Court of people for the 644
horses and mules from fifty thousand upwards.

The kitchen of Prester John is a good crossbow shot
behind his quarters, and they bring his food in this manner:
all that he has to eat comes in porringers and dishes of
very black earthenware on wooden trays, and pages bring
them, and above the pages come a pallium of silk, which
covers them so that these viands come with reverence.

5: Bruce T-5 (1768-1773) 1804
MP5 Amhara MP5

644 *King's Household.* The Serachmasery is Yesous Alaka*; he anoints the king at the coronation, and has ten ounces of gold for his salary. The Licaonte vote standing before the King and the Ras, but before the Billetana-gueta dakakin, and other meconem, sitting. Four licaonte and four azajes only vote before the king. The Palambaras was of old, in Tigre, called Lik sof. The Baal-magwass goes immediately before the king, dressed as the king, and his face, as the king's, half-covered. All his actions are imputed to the king; and when he kills an enemy in fight, it is said the king killed him. Shalaka are the heads of the king's soldiers, who are called by respective names, as Gimja-bet, Werk-saccala, &c. Azaje are officers over the king's household and revenues. The servants of the Licaonte are called Firaje and Baalheg; they vote with the Licaonte, and before them in civil causes. Rakmasery is superintendant of the bread, and the Shum mes of the wine, or hydromel. The Tersemba Azaje is the judge, or, as it is called, Dabna of the Wezizir, or nobles; Dimshas is an officer under him. Of the officers called Hadug, there are two; these are the king's wakeels, in the Abuna's house, and have one-third of his revenues.

Gera and Kanya wust-Azaje. He is the person, who, in capital crimes, accuses for the king; and is always one of the Licaonte, the most remarkable for his experience and discernment. Debena-bet haits is the person that executes, by his servants, all criminals at Debabay; he has the guard there at night, and, about three in the morning, gives the signal of the approach of day to the officers of the king's house by about 30 smacks of a whip, to drive away the hyænas and beasts of prey, that come to Debabye, the place of execution, in search of carcases. He has also the right of sending expresses to Gondar of the king's victories, and brings with him the heads, pudenda, &c. of traitors, which are exposed on the tree at the place of execution; at which time the merchants, both Mahometan and Christian, give presents, which, on great occasions, amount to 10 wakeas from each Moslem, and the same from the Atary, or Christian merchants. The viceroy, or kasmati of Ti-

* A church within, or near the palace.

[p. 54]

5: Bruce T-5 (1768-1773) 1804
MP5 Amhara MP5

gre, drinks out of a golden cup, as keeper of the law at Axum. There are 12 nagareets in Tigre, and forty-four persons are invested with the Ras-werk.

Church affairs. The Abuna is appointed by proclamation of the king, and is deposed at his pleasure. He holds of no other person. He ordains priests and deacons within the kingdom, consecrates churches, altars (tabot), &c. His revevenue was once very considerable, esteemed one-third of the revenues of the kingdom; but as those princes, who made the grants, resided in Shoa, or in the south of Tigre, the principal lands are in those provinces, adjoining to the royal residence. Now, the southern provinces are all in the hands of the Galla, as well as part of Tigre, and the governor, or Ras, has assumed the rest; so that of 400 oz. of gold once paid by Tigre, the Abuna, in my time, got only twenty-five, one-third of which went to the king's wakeel in his house. The Abuna appoints no officer, civil, or ecclesiastical; the king, or governor, does all. The king appoints officers, called Alaka, who administer in all cases the revenue of churches and convents; and this person is the judge of differences and suits among the priests and monks of his church, or fraternity, from whom lies no appeal but to the King, or to the Ras, who is understood to represent him. This Alaka is, or is not, a monk, or priest, at the king's pleasure. Of those who are called monks, are the communities of Debra Libanos, or Azazo, as it is now called, Waldubba, Werkleva, Damo, Mahabar Selasse, &c. These live in villages in these places, and reside or not as they please. The rest of that name are those who are ordained on any illness, disappointment, or advanced in life. The monks are ordained by the Itchegue, the others by any ordinary priest. Neither take any vow. The women of Waldubba are of the first kind, and all women past pleasure compose the second. There are many instances of both orders renouncing and marrying.

All persons, as well ecclesiastical as civil, are subject to the same laws, judgment, and tribunal, without exception, be the cause of whatever nature it may be. The Abuna, or Itchegue, have none of them a tribunal, nor can they take cognizance of any cause; especially the Abuna, who has, as I have said, an officer in his house appointed by the king, who pu-

[p. 155]

8: Rey G-5 (1910-1920)1935
MP5 Amhara MP5

tent secluded and when they go out they ride mules astride, are completely veiled or rather covered up in their *chammas* and are accompanied by an escort on foot, one or two of whom walk or trot by the side of the mule holding the lady in position.

Getting on to the mule is an operation that must by no means be witnessed by the profane masculine eye; I remember on the occasion of the first visit paid to my wife by an Abyssinian lady of rank I went to the entrance to speed the parting guest. To my surprise a number of members of the escort took off their *chammas* and held them all round the mule so that their mistress could climb into her saddle in complete seclusion.

But rigid as may be the rules of privacy governing the lives of women, there are no harems, and no guard of eunuchs to watch over them as in Moslem countries.

Nevertheless other Eastern customs are practised, such as circumcision among men and a mild form of clitoridectomy among women; this custom, be it observed, is not as is often supposed of Jewish origin, but probably of much more remote antiquity, and is further evidence of the Hamitic descent of the Abyssinians; according to Gibbon circumcision had been practised "by the most ancient Ethiopians, from motives of health and cleanliness" and presumably not therefore as a religious rite.

The nation as a whole has not adopted European dress, although it is worn to some extent in Addis Ababa, and by individuals who have been to Europe. They are proud of their national dress and the Emperor still encourages its use at court functions and receptions at the palace.

The distinctive feature of the dress is the *chamma*,

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

conventional Ge'ez honorific. Sanctity of the imperial office is an antique theme, deriving apparently from pagan ideas of divine kingship which were transplanted from South Arabia in the first millennium B.C. along with other aspects of Sabaean culture.[1] But the working ideology which has upheld this conception during the period of Amhara hegemony draws on Semitic motifs of later origin, motifs which received their classic formulation in the fourteenth century national epic, *Kebra Nagast* (*The Glory of Kings*).

The effect of the *Kebra Nagast* is to make the Ethiopian emperor both physical descendant and spiritual successor to the kings of Israel. The genealogical tie is argued by the legendary union of the Queen of Sheba and King Solomon, whose offspring, Menelik I, is held to have fathered the line of royalty which allegedly ruled at Aksum and was restored in the thirteenth century. The transfer of religious mission is shown both in a prophetic dream attributed to Solomon, in which God's favor passes from Israel to Ethiopia, and in the story of Menelik's theft from Jerusalem of the most sacred symbol of the Judaic mission, the Ark of the Covenant.* Furthermore, while at the time the *Kebra Nagast* was written the Ethiopian monarch was presented as a friendly cousin of the "king of Rome"—an echo of the sixth-century alliance between Caleb of Ethiopia and Justin I of Byzantium[2]—thereafter he came to be regarded as successor to the latter as well, and hence the sole defender of the true Christian faith.

The Ethiopians have elaborated on this exalted conception of their monarchy in other literary forms.[3] In royal chronicles and hymns of praise which span seven centuries, the emperors are celebrated for superlative beauty and superhuman powers. In splendor of countenance they are likened to the sun; in awesomeness of power, to the lion; in religious character and divine force, to the kings of Israel and, at times, to God Himself.

In life as well as in literature the person of the emperor was clad with an aura of sanctity. Ethiopian subjects have had to prostrate themselves and refrain from lifting their eyes in his presence. An analogous show of deference was expected when they received royal messages from afar; the recipient had to hear the message outside his home, standing, and naked above the waist.[4] The emperors rarely permitted themselves to be seen in public, and were often secluded by curtains while eating or drinking. They were not addressed directly, but through an interlocutor. Zar'a Yā'qob, whose officers were said to have kissed the earth each time they heard the sound of his voice, carried the demand for social distance so far that pages attached to his court were not permitted to have contact with anybody from outside, and were put to death if they dared to fraternize with local inhabitants.[5]

---

* The orthodox still maintain that the original ark containing the stone tablets of the Law is located at Aksum. It is symbolized by the *tābot* found in every Ethiopian church.

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

own right. Indeed, the record of rebellions by nobility as well as clergy against the emperors of Ethiopia bespeaks a persisting dualism in the Abyssinian's disposition toward the monarchy itself. In principle, the emperor is reverenced. Widely held is the sentiment expressed in the *Kebra Nagast:* "It is not a good thing for any of those who are under the dominion of a king to revile him, for retribution belongeth to God."[16] But unquestioning deference is by no means necessarily coupled with unswerving loyalty. The Abyssinian pattern differs from the Japanese, in which total loyalty to the divine monarch calls for suicide in the wake of any disgrace one might have brought upon him. The norms of fealty to the emperor have not been so deeply internalized in Ethiopia, where the pardon and reinstatement of rebels has been a common occurrence. Among Abyssinians a veneer of genuine deference has often concealed an inner consciousness of disaffection, enabling the individual to act out rebellious wishes when the opportunity or need arises. Indeed, this ambivalence has been one of the traditional impulses behind the culture pattern of wax and gold.

The Old Nobility

The Abyssinians themselves acknowledge the existence of, in addition to the emperor, two groups of persons with pre-eminent status. These are called, both in Ge'ez and Amharic, the ***makuānnent***, or "nobility," and the ***kāhenāt***, or "clergy." While believing the presence of a king to be a precondition of civil order, they also regard the presence of these other elites as necessary for their good life. This attitude is expressed in the Amharic saying: "Fertility of the land [is] through the ***makuānnent;*** the splendor of the church [is] through the ***kāhenāt.***"[17]

The term ***makuānnent*** may be used to refer to all secular dignitaries between the emperor and the well-to-do landowning peasantry. In strict contemporary usage, however, the ***makuānnent*** should be distinguished from two other classes of personages, whom we may call the "royal nobility" and the "local nobility" or "gentry." The former consists of the immediate royal family (***negusāwi bētasab***) and more distant royal relatives (***masāfent***). Because of their kinship with the Solomonic line these have at times been referred to as "chiefs of Israel."[18] Although it was customary for each new king to exile all male relatives who were potential candidates for the Crown to a high mountain fortress, more distant relatives might hold provincial governorates, and women of the royal family sometimes played an important role in court politics and provincial administration. Members of the royal nobility have normally been distinguished by special titles: *ābēto* (now vulgarized as *āto*, "Mister"), *le'ul*, and *lij* for men; and *emebēt*, *le'elt*, and *wayzaro* (now vulgarized in the sense of "Mrs.") for women.

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

The ultimate model for these constellations of servants and retainers was, of course, the imperial court. The *makuānnent* imitated the behavior of the emperor as much as it was within their means, prerogatives, and sense of discretion to do so. Thus, like the emperor, a nobleman never traveled on foot, but on the back of a caparisoned mule; with as many retainers as possible, shouldering spears or rifles, on the run behind him. He enjoyed a number of quasi-royal privileges: the authority to have cattle slaughtered and to have *tajj* prepared in his home; the right to wear a *barnos*, the dark wool cloak of the nobility; the use of an imported parasol, though not of the scarlet color reserved for the emperor, and of the horsehair fly-switch. In general, the Abyssinian noble attempted to behave like a king in his own sphere of influence and to reproduce in his own court that of the emperor. As d'Abbadie noted:

> A lord of even mediocre importance names his seneschal, his provost, his guards, a foreman of domestics, a chief baker, a butler, a squire, and various captains and pages; then he sets up a hierarchy often in ridiculous disproportion to his position; his inferiors do the same, and there is no one down to the well-to-do peasant who does not institute certain offices and analogous grades in his home. The Ethiopians often laugh about it themselves.[22]

A passion for acquiring titles is the obverse of the Abyssinian's penchant for instituting offices and grades. A man's title, *ya-mäʿerg sem* ("name of rank"), has been the major indicator of the déference which is due him. Honorific titles and the paraphernalia appropriate to them are perhaps the most sought after possessions in tradítional Abyssinia, for they confer inalienable status. Even if fate should deprive a man of all his wealth and power, he would retain his title until death. If he should become a prisoner, he would be given deferential treatment.

The titles of the nobility were, first and foremost, military titles. The *makuānnent* were above all an elite of war lords; and in contemporary Amharic the term *makuānnent* (singular *makonnen*) is also used to refer to any commissioned military officer. Their principal ranks, in descending order, are:

rās	"head" (of an army)
dajāzmātch	"general of the (king's) gate"
*fitāwrāri**	"general of the vanguard"
qañāzmātch	"general of the right wing"
gerāzmātch	"general of the left wing"
bālāmbārās	"commander of a fort"
bāshā†	"commander of a rifle corps"
shālaqā	"chief of a thousand"

* In former times the *fitāwrāri* ranked below the *gerāzmātch*.

† *Bāshā* is a Turkish loan word, introduced after the Turko-Abyssinian wars.

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

All these titles were conferred by the emperor. But, in addition, *makuānnent* with the rank of *rās* or *dajāzmātch* had the authority to appoint lesser officers under them. The number of troops commanded by these officers varied considerably according to circumstances. Among armies, moreover, there was great variability in status; the *fitāwrāri* of an emperor naturally enjoyed much more deference than the *fitāwrāri* of a provincial *dajāzmātch*.[23]

A number of other titles represented various civil functions. These included:

āfa negus	"mouth of the king" (lord chief justice)
āzāzh *liq* (Gondar) *wambar* (Shoa)	royal judges
naggādrās	"head of merchants" (customs collector and chief official over merchants)
ṭsahāfi lām *nagāsh* *shum* *ḳāntibā*	various titles given to provincial governors
malkaññā *meslanē*	local representatives of the emperor or provincial governors

A further set of titles was that given to the functionaries of the royal court. These were given for all court posts, including such offices as Server of the Mead (*ṭajj āsālläfi*). Some of these titles were found exclusively at the court of the emperor; others were imitated in noble households across the land, though again, the same title naturally carried far less prestige in the provinces than when held at the imperial court. The list of court titles varied from region to region and century to century, both in its composition and its hierarchical order.[24] At any given time and place, however, a rank order was carefully respected, and confusion over protocol could provoke altercation, as was recorded in the Chronicle of Iyāsu I (1682–1706).[25]

Titles (and numbers) of the principal court functionaries, in the (descending) order of importance fixed at the time of Iyāsu I, were:

behtwaddad	chief counsellor and confidant (two)
blattēn getā	chief administrator of the palace (greater and lesser [two])
rāq māsarē or *west āzāzh*	majordomo, master of ceremonies
ṭsahāfi te'ezāz	royal scribe; keeper of the seal (two)
zhāndarabā āzazh	chief of the eunuchs

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

565	*bəǰirond*	guardian of royal property, treasurer (two)
554	*liqə makuās*	king's double and keeper of the king's mule
644	*āggāfāri**	protocol officer, superintendent of banquets

The status of these dignitaries may have been particularly vulnerable, depending so closely as it did on the whims of the monarch. Nonetheless their proximity to the center of imperial power gave them unique advantages. They were in a position to receive many gifts for favors and influence, as well as to come by some part of the royal revenues and to attend the royal banquets. They were consulted, together with military commanders, provincial governors, and high ecclesiastics, on important matters of state. Lands granted to them for their services enabled them to support small retinues of their own, including, in some cases, military contingents. They were normally an important factor in promoting stability and continuity during the troubled moments that usually followed the death of an emperor.[26]

565 554 The above classification of titles is meant only to provide a quick overview of their variety; no such formal compartmentation existed in the Abyssinian perspective. All the titles converged into a single hierarchy.[27] What is more, titles were not strictly connected to offices or functions, so military titles were frequently given to court or civil functionaries. This was particularly true of [644] the court of Menelik, where, for example, the Superintendent of Royal Tents bore the title *bālāmbārās* and the Chief Hand-washer that of *gerāzmātch*.[28] [635] For centuries before, moreover, provincial governors were often known by military rather than civil titles, and men holding civil titles were liable to be called to take part in military campaigns by the sovereign.

565 The sociological reality underlying this overlapping of titles among the nobility was the essentially unspecialized nature of their role. The ideal type of the *makuānnent* was at once governor, soldier, and courtier. In time of war he set forth at his own expense, with his own troops, to support the cause of the emperor, or perhaps simply to defend his own regional interests. In time of peace he might sojourn, if permitted, at the court of his king or overlord, eating and drinking with his peers, giving counsel to his liege when asked, engaged in intrigue and otherwise seeking to improve his station.

[427] When not active in warfare or the affairs of court, the nobleman would repair to his lands to supervise the agricultural production and the collection [643] of rents from his tenants. The emperors rewarded nobles who served them [423] with grants of land. The higher chieftains in turn rewarded their own fol- [421] lowers accordingly. These estates were usually held *in absentia*, the peasants

* *Āggāfāri* is an important title in the courts of provincial lords but is not mentioned in the court list of Iyāsu I, nor in that of the *Sər'āta Mengest*.

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

Barradas: "Father, these villeins are like camels, they cry and groan when they are loaded, but in the end they carry the load that is put on them."[84] They set themselves off from the commoners, not only because of their style of life and subculture, but also because they came from well-known families.

Such sentiments were shared by the commoners. They would much rather be governed by a man from a noted family than by a person promoted from their own social level. The folkways expressed a disdain for the *nouvel arrivé*, for example, by poking fun at the office of *liqa makuās* (the king's double in time of battle). The *liqa makuās* was often a man from an unknown family, chosen because of his handsome features and resemblance to the king. The office permitted him to strut about in the king's clothes and inclined him to assume haughty airs. In some places it was customary to ridicule this upstart by referring to the minstrel, or *azmāri*, as *liqa makuās;* for the *azmāri*, too, was entitled to wear the kind of dress appropriate to the lord in whose banquet hall he performed, but the *azmāri* was a person of low prestige in Abyssinian society.

In other words: although the emperors could appoint and depose whenever they pleased, with or without cause; and though "the land and persons of their subjects are equally their property, and every inhabitant of their kingdom is born their slave"; by itself the principle of royal favor is clearly inadequate to explain the Abyssinian pattern of social stratification. For, unlike the neighboring kingdom of Buganda, Abyssinia was not a straightforward despotism in which the dispensation of a *kabaka* was sufficient to elevate a man into the highest social stratum.[85] The claims of a quasi-hereditary noble status group have also had to be satisfied.

How did this status group arise, and how have its claims been expressed and justified? What has been the history of its relationship with the monarchy? The existence of this class is anchored in the actual tendency for lands, office, and titles to be given to members of the same families. In reality, the emperors frequently let such possessions pass from father to son, either because they were in too distant a region or because there was no good cause for taking them away, and on occasion drew up written charters assigning grants of land to a man and his future descendants.[86] Indeed, one form of land tenure, known as *rĭsta-gult*, was precisely a sort of hereditary fief, given in exchange for military service over the generations. In certain areas, moreover, it was a matter of tradition that the governorship be given to members of a certain family. Finally, although no man inherited a title, as son of a nobleman he might inherit the culture and facilities that would give him a much better chance than any commoner to obtain a title of his own.

Two other aspects of Abyssinian society supported this tendency toward the development of what amounted to local dynasties of nobility. One was the prestige attached to the "chiefs of Israel," any of the nobility who could

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

It was at this time that the *makuānnent* came into their own. More unabashedly than ever they constituted, not a hereditary aristocracy in corporate opposition to the king, but a plurality of proud centers of rank—partly inherited, partly achieved—enjoying virtual autonomy. To move toward a modern nation it would be necessary to brake their centrifugal force.

The Clergy

Like the nobility, the clergy may be divided into those who are significant at the national level and those who are primarily local dignitaries. The former reside close to the imperial court, while the latter are thickly distributed around monasteries, churches, and wildernesses all over the country.

The highest ecclesiastical authority in Abyssinia was the *abuna* who, from the time of Frumentius in the fourth century until the death of Abuna Qerlos in 1949, was with few exceptions an appointee of the Coptic Patriarch at Alexandria. Chosen from the Egyptian monks of the convent of St. Anthony near the Red Sea, the *abuna* was brought, at great expense to the emperors, to live out his life in an alien land. Ignorant of the language and customs of the country, he played little part in the conduct of church affairs or in affairs of court; and when he did try to do so, his efforts were usually abruptly checked by jealous clerics and suspicious kings. His functions were purely ritual, but indispensable: he alone had authority to anoint and crown the emperor, to confer orders, and to absolve vows. From numerous revenues, rents, and fees, the *abuna* enjoyed a considerable income. Like the emperor, he was regarded as sacred because of the charisma of his office, and spent most of his time secluded from the public.[39]

Second in rank was the *eçhagē*, an appointment made by the emperor. This was the traditional title of the abbot of the convent of Dabra Libānos in Shoa, which in the course of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries gained hegemony over Abyssinian monasticism. The *eçhagē* served as administrative head of the church and had jurisdiction over all monks and monasteries. The most esteemed of the Ethiopian clergy, he tended to wield more actual power than the *abuna*. His provincial deputies, called *liqa kāhenāt*, controlled the secular clergy. This office was also bestowed by the emperor, and its functions included presenting candidates for ordination and deciding questions of protocol in connection with religious ceremonies.

In addition to these supreme dignitaries of the church, a small number of churchmen enjoyed pre-eminent status by virtue of their activities at the imperial court. These included the *aqābē sa'āt* ("guardian of the [canonical] hours"), the chief ecclesiastic at court, and during part of the reign of Zar'a Yā'qob the only official with unrestricted access to the king; the *qēs hāṭsē* ("king's chaplain"); the *liqa dabtarā* ("chief of the *dabtarā*"); and *liqa mammerān* ("chief of the learned men"). These four served as the four su-

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

preme judges at the royal court, and the *aqābē sa'āt* ranked third—in some lists, first—in the official order of precedence of all court dignitaries.[40]

One other church dignitary, finally, was the *nebra ed*, chief of the sacred district of Aksum, who always enjoyed a high position at the royal court. When appointed by the emperor (instead of by the provincial governor who sometimes possessed that authority), the *nebra ed* enjoyed the rare privilege of being permitted to sit while speaking in the event of his involvement in litigation.

The status of the highest ecclesiastical dignitaries was based on approximately the same factors as those which determined the status of secular nobility: royal favor; family background, in the case of those whose fathers were important nobles or noted churchmen; and the possession of wealth, political power, and imposing titles.[41] The same was true of their regional counterparts, the *alaqā*, "chiefs" of large churches and monasteries, whose wealth, power, and leisurely mode of life gave them, in Plowden's opinion, "perhaps the most enviable position in Abyssinia."[42]

The status of the clergy as a whole, however, rested on three other principles which are not affected by royal favor, birth, or worldly possessions. These were: contact with the most sacred symbols of religious authority; ascetic piety; and religious learning. Broadly speaking, in Abyssinia these three principles have been embodied primarily in three distinct roles, namely, those of priest, monk, and *dabtārā*.

A normal preparation for these roles—necessarily so, in the case of the priesthood—is service as a deacon. Ability to read is, now as before, a requisite qualification for the diaconate, but that requirement has in the past often been overlooked. More important has been the requirement of ordination by the *abuna*. Ordination formerly took place in the company of hundreds of other aspirants and, when there was uncertainty about the future availability of an *abuna*, even babes in arms were admitted.[43]

The traditional garb of the deacon is a yellowish cape made of sheepskins, though on holidays the officiating deacons may be dressed in richly colored silk robes like the priests. The duties of the deacon—and they are accounted great and secret privileges—are to prepare the sacramental bread, fetch the holy water, and assist at the Mass (the performance of which normally requires two priests and three deacons).

On reaching puberty a deacon is no longer supposed to serve in the church, for fear that he will become "impure." At that time he may decide to prepare for the priesthood. For this two qualifications must be met. He must have completed his study of reading and, ideally, of *zēmā*, the chants that are intoned in the liturgy of the Mass. These matters he may learn from the older clergy during his service as a deacon, or from his father, who, in many cases, is a priest himself. Otherwise, he goes off in search of a master. He